TD/B/40(2)/15
TD/B/WG.4/11

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Expansion of Trading Opportunities for Developing Countries on its third session

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
from 28 February to 4 March 1994

UNITED NATIONS

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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Geneva

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New York and Geneva, 1994

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Ad Hoc Working Group on Expansion of Trading Opportunities for Developing Countries held its third session at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 28 February to 4 March 1994. In the course of the session, the Ad Hoc Working Group held two plenary meetings and six informal meetings.

Opening statements

2. The **Chairman** drew attention to the work programme of the Ad Hoc Working Group, which calls for the Group to take into account global trends in the world economy in its examination of ways to expand the trading opportunities of developing countries. At its meeting on 16 December 1993, the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group had agreed that it would be desirable to address the subject of global trends at the Group's third session. The Bureau had also agreed that it would be useful to invite a panel of experts to assist the Group in its analysis of this subject. In order to constitute such a panel, the Bureau had agreed that the Chairman should request member States of the Ad Hoc Working Group to include relevant experts in their delegations to the third session. Accordingly, the Ad Hoc Working Group would devote a portion of the present session to a consideration of global trends and issues affecting trading opportunities of developing countries, including the panel discussion.

3. The **Deputy to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD** welcomed all delegations and guests on behalf of the Secretary-General. The Ad Hoc Working Group was at a critical juncture, he observed, because it had only a short period in which to carry out its assigned tasks and also because of its responsibility to contribute to the review to be conducted by the Trade and Development Board midway between Conferences, as agreed at UNCTAD VIII. The latter task involved a review and evaluation of the UNCTAD work programme. To this end, not only the Board itself but each of its subsidiary bodies was expected to assess the extent to which effect had been given to the relevant recommendations of UNCTAD VIII and to consider such further action as might be appropriate, making the outcome of these assessments available to the mid-term review to be conducted at a resumed session of the Board, scheduled to take place from 25 to 27 May 1994. Preliminary consideration would be given to this matter during the second part of the Board's fortieth session, from 18 to 29 April 1994. In keeping with this timetable, the President of the Board had invited all Chairmen of subsidiary bodies to prepare, in consultation with representatives of States members, an assessment for prompt submission to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD in his capacity as Chairman of the Informal Working Group charged with preparations for this review. The President of the Board had also stressed that the assessment should be as concise and focused as possible. The success of the mid-term review would depend in large measure on these contributions.

4. As for the implementation of the work programme itself, the numerous presentations on national experience transmitted by Governments for consideration under item 3 (a) of the agenda had amply demonstrated the

support given to the effort under way aimed at the expansion of trading opportunities for developing countries. Likewise the reports by the UNCTAD secretariat, covering regional integration arrangements, environmental measures and technical assistance, which were before the Group would facilitate discussion on the issues raised under items 3 (b) and (c) of the agenda. A further aspect of the work programme involved analysing the world economy with a view to determining global trends. To assist the Group with the latter endeavour, a high-level panel of experts would lead and participate in the discussions.

Chapter I

CONSIDERATION OF ISSUES ARISING FROM THE WORK PROGRAMME OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP

(a) Country presentations of national experience (export capabilities, market opportunities, export promotion and marketing)

(b) Market opportunities (regional integration arrangements, environmental measures)

(c) Technical cooperation

(Agenda item 3)

5. For its consideration of this item, the Ad Hoc Working Group had before it the following documentation:

"Market opportunities (environmental measures, structural adjustment policies, RBPs)", report by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/WG.4/6);

"Market opportunities (trade measures, implications of regional integration arrangements)", report by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/WG.4/7 and Corr.1);

"Technical cooperation for the expansion of trading opportunities for developing countries", report by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/WG.4/10);

"Environmental considerations in trade promotion and export development", note by the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.24);

"Executive summary of the study on foreign direct investment and exports of manufactures for developing economies", note by the UNCTAD secretariat (TD/B/WG.4/CRP.2);

Country presentations from Bolivia (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.2), Turkey (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.3), Panama (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.4), Ecuador (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.5 and Corr.1), Oman (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.6), Benin (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.7), Colombia (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.8), Germany (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.9), Brazil (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.10), Republic of Korea (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.12), Switzerland (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.13), United States of America (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.14 and Add.1), Nepal (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.15), Finland (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.16), Japan (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.17), India (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.18), France (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.19), Mexico (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.21), China (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.22 and Corr.1), Norway (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.23), Russian Federation (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.25), Romania (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.27), ACP (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.28), Indonesia (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.29) and Austria (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.30).

6. In introducing this item, the **Director of the International Trade Division** called attention to the documentation which had been prepared to assist the Ad Hoc Working Group in its discussions. Chapter II of the report

dealing with regional integration arrangements (TD/B/WG.4/7) examined the possible implications of major regional integration arrangements in terms of the export market opportunities of developing countries. The effects of such groupings on the trading opportunities of developing countries participating in them were evaluated along with the effects on those remaining outside the arrangements. The report also analysed the extent to which the improved productivity and efficiency of producers within groupings might render competition more difficult for other groupings or world markets. As for environmental measures, he recalled that the Ad Hoc Working Group had decided at its second session to continue discussion on this matter at the third session, on the basis of the report TD/B/WG.4/6. Further to this subject, cooperation on eco-labelling would be reported on in due course. Moreover, the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT (ITC) had most kindly prepared a note entitled "Environmental considerations in trade promotion and export development" (TD/B/WG.4/Misc.24) which would be introduced by the ITC representative.

7. The report TD/B/WG.4/7 also addressed the issue of trade measures as a factor determining export possibilities for developing countries. In accordance with Recommendation 1 endorsed by the Ad Hoc Working Group at its second session, the results of the Uruguay Round with a major bearing on this issue will be considered at the fourth session of the Ad Hoc Working Group, scheduled to take place from 4 to 8 July 1994.

8. With respect to sub-item 3 (c) of the agenda, the report on technical cooperation (TD/B/WG.4/10) underlined the needs and requirements of developing countries for technical assistance with respect to three areas: (a) expanding export capabilities; (b) strengthening investment environments to attract foreign direct investment; and (c) strengthening institutional capacities for economic policy-making and management. The report had also identified the priority needs of developing countries. In this connection, he drew special attention to paragraphs 51 to 53 highlighting the problem of adequacy of resources for technical cooperation. In closing he expressed appreciation to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and ITC, for undertaking to share their valuable ideas on technical assistance.

9. At its 7th (opening) plenary meeting on 28 February 1994, the Ad Hoc Working Group decided to discuss agenda item 3 in informal meetings.

Chapter II

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 8th (CLOSING) PLENARY MEETING

A. Action by the Ad Hoc Working Group on agenda item 3

10. At the Ad Hoc Working Group's 8th (closing) plenary meeting on 4 March 1994, the Chairman introduced a summary (TD/B/WG.4/L.10) based on country presentations, documentation prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat and that of other international bodies, the views expressed by the panel of experts and the discussions held during the session.

11. At the same meeting, the Ad Hoc Working Group decided to annex the Chairman's Summary to the report on its third session. For the text of the Summary, see Annex I.

B. Action by the Ad Hoc Working Group on agenda item 6 (mid-term review)

12. With reference to the preparations for the review to be conducted by the Trade and Development Board midway between Conferences, and to the call for assessments from each of the Board's subsidiary bodies regarding the extent to which effect had been given to the recommendations of UNCTAD VIII and any further action deemed appropriate, the Ad Hoc Working Group formally approved its interim report of the work accomplished so far, which the Chairman would forward with a covering letter to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD in his capacity as Chairman of the Informal Working Group set up to prepare the work of the Board. This action was being taken in response to the invitation of the President of the Trade and Development Board in his letter of 14 February 1994 addressed to the Chairmen of all subsidiary bodies of the Board. In view of the timing of the completion of the Uruguay Round, and the Group's mandate, the final report, taking into account the Uruguay Round's implications for the expansion of trading opportunities of developing countries, would be prepared at the fourth (final) session of the Ad Hoc Working Group scheduled to be held from 4 to 8 July 1994.

C. Closing statement

13. In commending all who had contributed to the successful outcome of the session of the Ad Hoc Working Group, particularly the delegations participating, the panel of invited experts who had contributed to the discussion on global trends and issues affecting trading opportunities of developing countries, and the UNCTAD secretariat for the well-prepared documentation, the **Chairman** noted that such support had greatly facilitated her task of leading the Group.

Chapter III

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

A. Opening of the session

14. The third session of the Ad Hoc Working Group was opened on 28 February 1994 by the Chairman.

B. Election of officers 1/

(Agenda item 1)

15. At its 7th (opening) plenary meeting on 28 February 1994, the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group was constituted as follows:

Chairman:	Mrs. Magda Shahin (Egypt)
Vice-Chairmen:	Mr. I. Kinnas (Greece) Mr. P. Hutabarat (Indonesia) Mr. C. Sinencio (Mexico) Mr. Y. Afanassiev (Russian Federation) Mr. H. Dzvimbo (Zimbabwe)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Dietmar-Gert Lackner (Austria)

C. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

(Agenda item 2)

16. At the same meeting on 28 February 1994, the Ad Hoc Working Group adopted its provisional agenda (TD/B/WG.4/9) as follows:

1. Election of officers

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

3. Consideration of issues arising from the work programme of the Ad Hoc Working Group:

   (a) Country presentations of national experience (export capabilities, market opportunities, export promotion and marketing)

1/ In accordance with the decision taken by the Trade and Development Board at the first part of its thirty-ninth session, the officers elected at the first session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Expansion of Trading Opportunities for Developing Countries are to remain in office for the duration of the life of the Ad Hoc Working Group. In view of the replacement of some officers at the second session, the elected officers of the Working Group are currently as indicated.

(b) Market opportunities (regional integration arrangements, environmental measures)

(c) Technical cooperation

4. Provisional agenda for the fourth session of the Ad Hoc Working Group

5. Other business

6. Adoption of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group to the Trade and Development Board, fortieth session, second part (resumed), mid-term review.

D. Provisional agenda for the fourth session of the Ad Hoc Working Group

(Agenda item 4)

17. At its 8th (closing) plenary meeting on 4 March 1994, the Ad Hoc Working Group adopted the draft provisional agenda for its fourth session (TD/B/WG.4/L.9). For the text of the provisional agenda, see Annex II.

E. Other business

(Agenda item 5)

18. There were no points raised under this agenda item in the course of the session.

F. Adoption of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group to the Trade and Development Board

19. At its 8th (closing) plenary meeting on 4 March 1994 the Ad Hoc Working Group on Expansion of Trading Opportunities for Developing Countries adopted the draft report of its third session (TD/B/WG.4/L.7) and authorized the Rapporteur to complete the final text as appropriate.

Annex I

CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY

On the basis of the country presentations, the documentation prepared by the secretariat and other international bodies, the views expressed by the panel of experts, and the discussions of the Ad Hoc Working Group, the Chairman summed up the results of the third session as follows:

I. GLOBAL TRENDS IN THE WORLD ECONOMY AFFECTING THE TRADING OPPORTUNITIES OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

1. Although the growth of world output and trade had decelerated in recent years from the 1988 peak, owing to the recession in the OECD countries and the sharp contraction of economic activities of Central and Eastern European economies in transition, the prospects for growth of the world economy and trade in coming years were believed to be promising. Economic recovery, now under way in some OECD countries, seemed likely to spread to other OECD countries in the coming years. While the timing of economic recovery in Central and Eastern European economies in transition was difficult to predict, there were nevertheless signs of recovery, however sluggish, in some of these economies. On the whole, the situation of these countries remained problematic. With respect to the developing countries, their economic and trade performance in the aggregate had been better in recent years than that of the developed countries, thanks to a combination of appropriate domestic policies (including the implementation of structural adjustment programmes), lower long-term world interest rates and a surge in capital inflows. The continuation of these factors in the 1990s would improve the prospects for developing countries. Also, the implementation of the Uruguay Round results would be a positive factor.

2. Despite this favourable outlook for the world economy in the 1990s, the outcome for many developing countries was not without risks posed by a number of factors. For one thing, the economic performance of individual as well as groups of developing countries could vary significantly, leading to a widening gap among these countries; secondly, the international economic climate could take a turn for the worse; thirdly, because of structural changes in the world economy, the international economic environment was becoming more competitive; and, fourthly, notwithstanding the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round, protectionist pressures could re-emerge if the growth in OECD countries faltered. In addition, the situation of commodity-exporting developing countries which had been adversely affected by the downward trend in real commodity prices over the past decade remained worrisome. These countries continued to lack the resources (financial, human and institutional) necessary to carry out successful diversification programmes. The situation of least developed countries and African countries was noted as particularly precarious. Clearly, expansion of trade was of crucial importance for the economic growth and development of all developing countries.

3. Foreign direct investment (FDI) and the globalization of production had had a major impact on trading opportunities. There was a qualitative difference in the character of foreign direct investment in recent years. A key development in the last 10 years had been the movement towards integrated international production systems and marketing by large enterprises. Liberalization of trade and investment facilitated the transfer of technology, while the emergence of information technology made global management possible on a day-to-day basis. An important implication of this was that within a corporate network any part of the value-added chain could, in principle, be undertaken anywhere in the world. Experience showed that countries wishing to attract foreign investment needed to have an open economic framework that was stable and predictable, and which allowed transfer of earnings. This implied that Governments needed to be pro-active in a number of areas. A favourable environment included not only liberalization of regulations but also the creation of a supportive infrastructure for domestic production. It was noted, however, that the surge in FDI inflows to developing countries in recent years had gone to a limited number of countries.

II. BUILDING EXPORT CAPABILITIES

A. Role of Government

4. Consideration of additional national experiences and country presentations had confirmed the general conclusions derived from the Group's discussion at its second session on the role of government in fostering the development of internationally competitive export capabilities in developing countries. In particular, it was felt that Governments had a vital role to play in creating and preserving an enabling environment for private-sector development through the provision of basic public, social and economic services and by removing administrative and legal restraints on the setting up and operation of enterprises. Governments could promote growth in the private sector through human resources development, support for investment and fostering of business networks. A partnership between the public and private sectors was vital for the successful planning and implementation of trade and investment programmes.

B. Foreign exchange

5. A rational foreign-exchange management system which relied on the forces of supply and demand, as well as appropriate macroeconomic policies, including monetary policy, was a necessary condition to set the exchange rate for a suitable development of foreign trade (exports and imports). Moreover, such an exchange-rate management system obviated the need for complicated foreign exchange and import control systems to offset the bias against exports of an unrealistically high exchange rate.

C. Human resources development

6. Further emphasis was placed on human resources development through vocational education, higher education and special training of workers to absorb new technologies and skills as a strategic element in building export capabilities.

D. Foreign direct investment

7. It was stressed that foreign direct investment had a major role to play in developing trading relationships. Foreign investment could offer access to new technologies, management skills and export markets. While the decision on where a company should invest was a commercial matter, Governments of both investing and recipient countries had a role to play in providing a framework through agreements on investment promotion and protection and through the use of aid instruments to facilitate investment in sound projects in markets perceived as difficult.

III. EXPANDING EXPORT MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

A. Environmental measures

8. It was felt that there was a need for more policy analysis and conceptual work in order to contribute to the reconciliation of environmental and trade policies. In addition, there was a need to inform the private sector in developing countries about the new measures and trends in the field of trade and environment in order to ensure an easier compliance with newly established requirements. For example, while efforts should be devoted to making sure that packaging and eco-labelling programmes did not become a new trade barrier, especially for developing countries, these countries also needed support in order to exploit new trading opportunities arising from the certification of products as "environmentally friendly" and to establish their own national eco-labelling programmes.

9. Developing countries also needed to adopt environmental standards in order to forestall imports of environmentally unacceptable products and to avoid the dumping in their markets of goods no longer accepted in the countries of origin.

10. The need was emphasized for the transfer of technology to developing countries so as to enhance their capacity to produce environmentally friendly products and to promote their trading opportunities in respect of new products and services arising from environmental concerns.

11. In accordance with the mandate of Agenda 21, UNCTAD had an important role to play in conceptualization and policy analysis regarding the interface between environmental measures and trade. Furthermore, the need for greater coordination between UNCTAD and other relevant international bodies, in particular the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT (ITC), was stressed. It was noted that UNCTAD and ITC had complementary roles to play in information dissemination and technical assistance for exploiting the new trading opportunities arising from new environmental measures and standards (UNCTAD at intergovernmental and policy level and ITC at operational level).

B. Regional integration arrangements

12. Rapid extension and intensification of regional integration arrangements had occurred throughout all regions, including the faster extension of groupings formed around major trading nations, the emergence of mixed arrangements between developing countries and their major trading partners, and a revival of integration among developing countries.

13. The new features of regional integration processes were likely to have important implications for both participating countries and third countries, and, more specifically, for the export opportunities of developing countries.

14. Export opportunities for developing and other countries outside of the regional arrangements were highly dependent on the openness of regional integration schemes. The elimination of intra-regional barriers should be accompanied by the reduction or removal of barriers in trade with third countries. Hence, regional and multilateral approaches should be complementary.

15. Inward orientation of regional arrangements, however, might affect adversely the trading opportunities of non-member countries.

16. Ideally, regional integration schemes consistent with the multilateral trading system would promote intra-regional trade and, through higher economic growth, also stimulate trade with third countries. In this way, new export opportunities would be created for economies inside and outside such arrangements.

17. The full and speedy implementation of the results of the Uruguay Round could make a significant contribution to enhancing the outward orientation of regional integration groupings.

18. The effects of integration schemes on export opportunities of developing countries also depended on the economic dynamism and competitive strength of the export-supply capabilities of both participating countries and third-country trading partners.

IV. EXPORT PROMOTION AND MARKETING

19. Governments in both developing and developed countries had a role to play in promoting exports from developing countries. Developing countries needed to give increased attention to human resources development in export management, particularly for increasing exporters' professional skills and knowledge of foreign markets. They also needed to increase investments in export promotion and marketing activities. The importance of quality control as an instrument for promoting exports was emphasized, including the need for appropriate mechanisms at the governmental and private-sector levels to ensure the quality of export products.

20. Trade promotion agencies of developed countries could assist developing countries to increase their exports through, inter alia, provision of information and promotional assistance, advice to developing-country trade officials, organizations and individual exporters, export management training programmes, as well as the funding of export development projects.

21. The raising of awareness of trading arrangements and sources of advice and assistance needed to be more fully addressed internationally and in this context there was a need to support the aims of the UNCTAD Trade Points initiative.

22. The capacities and overseas sales channels of foreign firms investing in developing countries also provided a means for export promotion and marketing. Attention should be given to how best the channels of foreign companies could be utilized.

V. TECHNICAL COOPERATION

23. It was felt that technical cooperation - bilateral, regional and multilateral - had an important role to play in helping the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, to build export capabilities, to identify and respond to export market opportunities, and to strengthen their export promotion and marketing capabilities. Accordingly, it was felt that technical cooperation with developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, needed to be strengthened with a view to enabling these countries to increase their participation in international trade, and to enlarge and improve their export market opportunities. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of human-resources development and institution-building in all technical cooperation activities in order to expand the trading opportunities of developing countries.

24. It was suggested that there was a need to review the technical cooperation needs of developing countries, and the least developed countries in particular, as well as to review on-going technical assistance programmes in order to identify gaps. It was considered difficult to set priorities. Demand-driven technical assistance could be most effective for beneficiaries. Some areas where technical cooperation could be strengthened were as follows:

(a) Trade and environment:

(i) Regulatory measures affecting trade

(ii) Development and marketing of environmentally friendly products

(iii) Investment promotion technology; human resources development

(b) Analysis of trade control measures

(c) Utilization of GSP

(d) Implementation of the Uruguay Round results and analysis of post-Uruguay Round issues

(e) Competition policy and the impact of RBPs

(f) Designing appropriate export strategies

(g) Identification and utilization of trading opportunities arising from regional integration arrangements

(h) Institutional capacity-building.

Annex II

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON EXPANSION OF TRADING OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

1. Election of officers

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

3. Consideration of issues arising from the work programme of the Ad Hoc Working Group:

   Results of the Uruguay Round and their effects on the trading prospects of the developing countries, including identification of opportunities arising from the reduction of tariffs and non-tariff measures on products of export interest to them

4. Other business

5. Adoption of the final report of the Ad Hoc Working Group to the Trade and Development Board.

Annex III

MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE a/

1. The following States members of UNCTAD, members of the Ad Hoc Working Group, were represented at the session:

Algeria
Austria
China
Colombia
Côte d'Ivoire
Cuba
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Denmark
Egypt
France
Germany
Ghana
Greece
India
Indonesia
Iraq
Japan
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Madagascar
Mexico
Morocco
Myanmar
Netherlands
Nigeria
Norway
Philippines
Republic of Korea
Romania
Russian Federation
Saudi Arabia
Slovakia
Sri Lanka
Switzerland
Tunisia
Turkey
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Uruguay
Venezuela
Zimbabwe

2. The following other States members of UNCTAD, not members of the Ad Hoc Working Group, were represented as observers at the session:

Argentina
Azerbaijan
Bahamas
Belize
Bolivia
Central African Republic
Chile
Costa Rica
Ecuador
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Finland
Guatemala
Ireland
Italy
Jamaica
Malaysia
Nepal
Oman
Panama
Paraguay
Portugal
Qatar
Spain
Sweden
Thailand

3. The International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT was represented at the session.

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a/ For the list of participants, see TD/B/WG.4/INF.3

4. The following specialized and related agencies were represented at the session:

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
International Monetary Fund
International Telecommunications Union
United Nations Industrial Development Organization

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade was also represented.

5. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the session:

African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
European Community
League of Arab States
Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development

6. The following non-governmental organizations were represented at the session:

General Category

World Assembly of Small and Medium Enterprises
World Federation of United Nations Associations

7. The following panellists participated at the session:

Mr. Masood AHMED, World Bank, Washington
Mr. Alfred MAIZELS, University of Oxford
Mr. Jaime de MELO, University of Geneva
Mr. D. ROSATI, Economic Commission for Europe, Geneva
Mr. Raed SAFADI, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris
Mr. Karl P. SAUVANT, UNCTAD

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Printed at United Nations, Geneva
GE.94-51192–April 1994–3,590

United Nations publication